

# CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b> Northern Telephone Easement	<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b> May - 2008
<b>Proponent:</b> Northern Telephone Cooperative, Inc. PO Box 190, Sunburst, MT 59482	
<b>Type and Purpose of Action:</b> Northern Telephone Cooperative Inc. has applied for an easement to install and maintain a buried telecommunications cable (fiber optics) across state land. The cable will cross approximately 1 mile of state land (native rangeland).	
<b>Location:</b> E½E½E½, Sec 16, T32N, R4W (along east section line)	<b>County:</b> Toole

## I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	DNRC
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	None
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	Approve the LUL.  No action. Do not approve the LUL.

## II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS
	N = Not Present or No Impact will occur. Y = Impacts may occur (explain below)
4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] Soils are suitable for cable installation. Cable will be ripped in to minimize soil disturbances. All disturbed areas will be re-contoured and returned to grazing land. No long term impacts to soil erosion and /or other soil resources are expected.
5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] The proposed action will not affect water quality and quantity.
6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] The proposed action will not impact air quality.
7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result	[N] Current land use is grazing land – native rangeland. The cable will be ripped in which will minimized impacts to the existing vegetation. All disturbed areas will be recontoured and

<b>II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>	
of this proposed action?	reseeded to native vegetation similar to the surrounding plant communities. No long term impacts to the existing vegetation are expected.
8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] No long-term negative affects on existing wildlife species and/or wildlife habitat are expected.
9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] No threatened or endangered species are known to exist in this area.
10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] A field inspection of the proposed cable route was completed on April 30, 2008 by Erik Eneboe. Several stone circles were found in the project area. An archaeological reported titled "Cultural Resource Management Report – Ethridge South Fiber 3, Toole County Montana" authored by Garvey C. Wood and Associates, Loma Montana was also completed for this project (Attached). This report indicates that "2 archaeological sites were discovered on the project area". Identified cultural sites will be marked prior to installation and avoided. Thus, no cultural artifacts and/or cultural resources will be impacted as a result of this project.
11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] The fiber optics cable will be buried. Not long term changes to the aesthetic character of the land will occur.
12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] The demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed action. There are no other projects in the area that will affect the proposed project.
13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of other private, state or federal current actions w/n the analysis area, or from future proposed state actions that are under MEPA review (scoping) or permitting review by any state agency w/n the analysis area?	[N] Currently, there are no other studies, plans, or projects associated with the proposed project area.

<b>III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</b>	
<b>RESOURCE</b>	<b>[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES</b>
14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	[N] The proposed project will not affect human health or human safety in the area.
15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[Y] The proposed fiber optics cable will provide state of the art telecommunications for a wind turbine project and rural residents in the area. This will positively impact area industry and agricultural activities.
16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number. Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] Local contractors and cooperative employees will be used to install this cable. The proposed action will increase local jobs.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] The proposed action will slightly increase local and State tax revenues.
18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] This project will not require additional governmental services.
19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[N] The proposed action is in compliance with other State and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.
20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] This state land tract is in a remote region, isolated and legally accessible to the public. The proposed action will not create conflict to other general recreational activities within the area.
21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] The proposed action will not change the human population distribution or the housing requirements in the area.
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N] The proposed action will not alter the social structure of surrounding native communities.
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N] The proposed action will not impact the cultural uniqueness and/or the cultural diversity of the area.
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES: Is there a potential for other future uses for easement area other than for current management? Is future use hypothetical? What is the estimated return to the trust. Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] The school trust will receive a one time easement fee based upon fair market value of the grazing land crossed.

EA Checklist Prepared By: /S/ ERIK ENEBOE  
Erik Eneboe

Conrad Unit Manager - CLO  
Title

Date: May 12, 2008

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Recommend issuing easement for the telecommunications line.
26. SIGN4IFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	<p>Significant impacts are not anticipated as a result of the proposed action.</p> <p>The project site is has suitable terrain for the installation of the telecommunications cable. The project will not affect water quality. Mitigations to re-seed and re-contour the rangeland are standard techniques to minimize impacts. Cultural sites have been identified and will be avoided. There are no unique, threatened or endangered species habitats present.</p>
27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis:  <input type="checkbox"/> EIS <input type="checkbox"/> More Detailed EA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Further Analysis	

EA Checklist Approved By:

Garry Williams

Area Manger, CLO

Name

Title

/S/ Garry Williams

5/13/2008

Signature

Date